UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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Control of Tussock Moth Outbreak Highly Successful:

(For November 23 Release)

The application of DDT sprays from airplanes over forests of the Northwest this past summer, in the largest forest-insect spraying project of its kind ever undertaken, was a complete success in quickly bringing under control a severe outbreak of the Douglas fir tussock month, Dr. P. N. Annand, Chief of the Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, said today. This control operation, carried out as a cooperative undertaking by the Bureau, the Forest Service, the States concerned, and private timber owners, saved billions of board feet of valuable timber from certain destruction.

Surveys late in 1946 showed that the Douglas fir timber on over 400,000 acres in the vicinity of Moscow, Idaho was partially to completely defoliated by this insect and that considerable tree mortality had already occurred on part of the area. Smaller areas of infestation were also found in Oregon and Washington. It appeared certain that much of the 1,518,000,000 board feet of commercial timber with stumpage value of $4,625,000 in the infested area in Idaho would be killed if nothing were done to prevent defoliation in 1947. Another 1,182,000,000 board feet of timber on adjacent areas were likely to become infested if the outbreak continued for another year or two. The values at stake were too great to rely on the possible action of natural forces in the form of diseases, parasites, predators or weather conditions in checking the outbreak.

Control operations were therefore undertaken in 1947. During the period May 22 to July 2, 390,881 gallons of DDT solution were sprayed from airplanes over 413,469 acres of the most heavily infested timber, nearly all of which was in mountainous country. Several small planes, as well as large planes of the C-47 and

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Ford Tri-motor type made a total of 2,120 flights in treating 395,535 acres in Idaho, 13,559 acres in Oregon, and 4,375 acres in Washington. Most of the spraying was done while the caterpillars were small and before they had caused much defoliation.

Results were even better than the entomologists and foresters in charge of the work had dared to hope for. A few days after each area was sprayed it was almost impossible to find living caterpillars in that area. No evidence of any marked drop in the caterpillar population in unsprayed areas was found until close to the end of the feeding period, soon after spraying was completed. At that time, in areas that had not been sprayed, it was found that a polyhedral virus disease was very prevalent and that mature caterpillars were being killed by this disease or by insect parasites. In the sprayed areas, the disease and parasites were killing the few caterpillars that were not killed by the DDT spray. This indicated the possibility that the outbreak might have been brought to a close at the end of the 1947 feeding period even if no spraying had been done. However, had artificial control not been carried out it is certain that a very large area of timber already weakened by defoliation in 1946 would have been completely defoliated in 1947 before the disease and parasites became effective and much of the timber would have been killed.

Surveys are now being made to determine whether any isolated areas remain where spraying may be necessary in 1948.

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